nalized with a loud sounding of the table and a solemnly sworn oath. 695
The vow resounds fiercely through the *ak-ui,* and then justice has been done.

Kirgiz scoff at the thought of grubbing at the soil, but they are 151
hardy, courageous men who mount patrol on the lofty Pamirs. They 223
have a keen sense of sight and can spot small objects from miles away. 224
Falconry is the great sport for those who are the wealthiest, and the 526
usual quarry is a type of hill partridge, the *chikor.* Sometimes the young women as well as the men become adept at this. Big game is limited, but at times the Kirgiz do hunt the now rapidly vanishing *ovis poli,* or long-horned mountain sheep, when it can be found. A sport they especially like is *baiga,* a contest like the *ulagh* of the Wei-wu-erh. In *baiga* some forty or fifty mounted sportsmen strive with each other to retrieve a dead carcass of a sheep or goat. One of the contestants dashes forward and hurls the carcass to the ground while the others wait. Then, in a thundering onrush of dust and shouts, the remainder of the players lunge toward the game. They resort to all manner of tactics to get to the recumbent prize—they beat an opponent's mount if it is in the way, they unhorse each other, and they ride their steeds like champions. Such confusion and bedlam; but it is rare, beautiful excitement.

A long coat stuffed with wool and cotton is worn by the Kirgiz over 291
trousers tucked into high boots, while a fur piece with ear coverings 581
(or an embroidered round cap) keeps his head warm. His woman is attired alike, but she wears a turban precariously high on her head. The gala Kirgiz occasion is a wedding, and divorce is not common. According to his religion a Moslem is permitted four wives, but a Kirgiz is usually not rich enough to afford more than one. Hilarity and celebration, not sadness, characterize the funeral ceremony of the Kirgiz. The basis for this, they point out, is that the dead are giving away to their heirs the wealth that has been amassed during a lifetime of labor; festivity, consequently, is in order. At the funeral the dead person is placed on a hill-top, interred with food, clothing, and a certain amount of money in a high, walled tomb. The sustenance is supposed to feed him on the way to the hereafter. This, like certain other rites of the 764

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

not favourably impressed. For Asiatics—I do not judge them by our lower Western standards—most of the Tungans we saw were remarkably bad-mannered. Whenever either of us tried to buy anything in the bazaars, either at Bai or at the New City of Aqsu, great louts of Tungans would stand round and exchange what were obviously comments on our appearance and behaviour, bursting every now and again into loud guffaws. We were not very sorry to leave Bai, though we greatly regretted that time did not permit of a visit to the far more interesting and important town of Kucha.

The 107 miles *viâ* Abad to Aqsu Old City occupied five days. Our first halt was at the flourishing village of Yaka Ariq on the right bank of the Muzart River. The main road for the next 50 miles lies almost entirely over barren and uninteresting country, so we left it and made due westwards for the curious red hills of Abad, among which I had hopes of another chance at the wild sheep. Camping for the night at Ilkache, the last oasis of the Muzart Valley cultivation, I rose before dawn and spent a long morning scouring the hills, but saw only several herds of antelope. Meanwhile D. and the caravan struck camp at a more reasonable hour and marched to a low pass among the hills appropriately named the Topa Dawan or "Dusty Pass," where I met them at midday. It was here that we made a new and most picturesque acquaintance, the Kirghiz headman of Qara Bulaq, Hushur Beg. As I approached the "Dusty Pass" I saw the solitary figure of a man on a horse standing on the crest of a ridge. This proved on closer inspection to be a youngish Kirghiz with a high-cheek-boned, weather-beaten face, mounted on a shaggy little Kalmuck pony. On his right wrist, which was protected by a large white fleece gauntlet and supported on the saddle by a wooden prop, he carried a magnificent hooded *qara qush* or black hunting-eagle. This bird, I afterwards found, measured three feet from beak to tail and over seven feet from wing-tip to wing-tip; it was a dull black in colour, with a ruff of rust-coloured feathers, yellow claws, black beak with yellow base and fine red-brown eyes. From the near side of Hushur Beg's saddle dangled an object which puzzled me at first; it proved to be the lure with which he attracted the bird back from wandering, and consisted of a large ball made of skin from the heads of antelopes. The Beg turned out to be a thoroughly good type of man and a real sportsman, very different from the lazy and untrustworthy "Taghliks" of Pakalik and Tarlak.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

He was passionately fond of hawking and "eagling," if one may coin the word; he used hawks for hares and other small game, eagles for antelopes and sometimes wolves. He told me he would not part with his favourite *qara qush* for a hundred taels, though it was very fierce and had more than once clawed him when hungry and rashly unhooded. I noticed that he held the string attached to its hood in his teeth, and that after unhooding it for a moment so that I could take a photograph of the two of them, he put the hood on again at once with his bridle hand. He pointed out to me the precipitous red sandstone cliffs above Abad where it had been netted as a fledgeling.

He also told me about his hawks, among which he prized most a white one from the Altai. All over Central Asia these white hawks,[1] which are exceedingly difficult to get, are highly prized, though their performances are not, I believe, in any way superior to those of ordinary falcons. They are occasionally brought from Ili to the Aqsu market, where they fetch from fifty to a hundred taels or more. Almost every year the Mehtar (Chief) of Chitral, the Mir of Nagar or some such potentate from the Indian frontier sends men up to Kashgar to try and buy a white hawk; as often as not the messenger returns empty-handed.

Three days later we marched through the narrow and dirty but picturesque wood-and-mud-brick bazaars of Old Aqsu to the charming house and garden outside the western gate which had been placed at our disposal. We were pleased to find that our host was the same Haji whose ranch at Yetim Döbe had been such a haven of refuge to us in the Tien Shan. Buried in trees, just far enough from the town to escape its noise and dust, the country house of Abdus Sattar Haji was a pleasant place indeed. A couple of hundred yards to the north ran the long line of perpendicular loess cliffs, forty or fifty feet high, which bound the city of Aqsu on the north and east and evidently mark an ancient channel of the Qum Ariq River. Under the level rays of the setting sun the place gave the impression of a marvellous piece of theatrical scene-painting; the tall white stems of the poplars and the rainbow-tinted autumn foliage blended perfectly with the warm grey-brown tones of the "drop-scene" of cliff in the background, and with the entirely mediæval walls and massive gates and bastions of the town.

[1] *Hierofalco altaiensis*, Turki *toighun*.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

THE

only incident worthy of mention was a most exciting wild-pig shoot which we had at Ordeklik among the thick tamarisk jungles. Half the village came out on foot or horseback, accompanied by dogs, and carrying bludgeons made of tamarisk shoots with heads the size of cricket-balls carved out of the root of the bush. I made them drive a long stretch of jungle and was lucky enough to secure with my rifle an enormous pig, on the succulent hams of which we and the entire Russian colony at Kashgar afterwards feasted. The pigs do a great deal of damage to the crops of the Ordeklik people, who hunt them with their dogs and clubs most pluckily.

During the " Indian summer " of mid-November in Central Asia the clearness of the air is extraordinary. From Lungkor, half-way to Kashgar, we saw plainly the snows of the Qungur range, more than 120 miles away, rising above the south-western horizon like icebergs from the desert sea. Though we reached Kashgar as late as 16th November, it was still pleasantly warm, nor was there any sign of ice on the marsh-lakes; yet a fortnight later the land was in the grip of winter and the ice on the lakes was a foot thick.